

# NO REPRIEVE

*Frank De Canio*

When I was young, an inmate doomed to die  
reminded us we too were on death row.  
I snickered at his self-consoling lie;  
and in my high-rise cell presumed to sow  
the seeds of liberty that might defy  
my jailers. Thus, I cultivated mind  
and body in a vain attempt to buy  
myself more time against Life's fatal bind.  
And later, on a television show,  
a killjoy meets the felon she'd betrayed.  
He lets her weary brain enjoy the flow  
of warmth inside the prison that she'd made  
for herself, then kills her. Just so, some god  
sends us a cornucopia of years  
that pass like haunted ghosts. And thus, we plod  
our way in chains. Sweet recollection sears  
us midst the shadows and advancing gloom  
that mark our plaintive journey to the tomb.

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